own. His retreat lured the Vulcan's tongue into Kirk's mouth, to be captured, and expertly sucked while the Human's lips pressed down hard.

Spock moaned, his hand tightening on Kirk's buttocks. Slowly his fingers crept inwards, seeking the tight opening, then probed into the Human's body. Kirk stiffened, and plunged his tongue into Spock's mouth. The Vulcan withdrew his hand, grasped Kirk's hips and lifted him, then brought the Human down so that he was impaled on the stiffly-erect penis. Kirk gasped into Spock's mouth and began to rotate his hips, each movement increasing the pressure inside him. Spock tore his mouth away and blindly sought Kirk's nipples. The human's head fell back.

"Please," he whispered, and Spock gave one last convulsive thrust upwards, his semen spurting into Kirk's body as the Human writhed in ecstatic release. Trembling with reaction, they clung together until their heartbeats slowed, then Spock turned to hold Kirk in his arms.

"Tomorrow," he whispered. "Tomorrow I will be initiated as a warrior. Only then can we bond, Jim, for Selon is skilled at the mind link. He might detect that you had become part of me."

"I understand, Spock," came Kirk's drowsy reply as he settled closer. "I can wait--but not for long!"

The following day Kirk attended Spock during his formal initiation as a warrior. The ceremony took place in the Hall of Ancestors, which was now ablaze with light and richly hung with tapestries illustrating the history of the family. Under an immense representation of the family crest--a mythical bird of prey--a low dias had been built to one side of the firepit at the rear of the hall. Selon and his captains stood to one side of the dias, Sarek and some of Spock's family to the other. Again T'Kara was present in a place of honor, a fact which still confused Kirk.

The main hall was filled with guests, presumably lesser members of the household. Even the slaves were gathered at the rear. As Kirk entered at Spock's heels the witnesses began to intone a complex chant in the archaic form of the Vulcan language, which was incomprehensible to the Human.

Kirk had never discovered what form of religion, if any, the Vulcans practiced. Presumably slaves were not to be concerned with such things. But his part in the ceremony had been carefully explained to him. He followed two paces behind as Spock, dressed only in sandals and a plain tunic of heavy white silk, advanced slowly and knelt before Selon. The warrior leaned over him, gathered the long flowing hair into his hand, and severed it with a knife so that it fell now just below his ears.

Kirk stepped forward and received the silken mass across the palms of his outstretched hands, then walked slowly toward the firepit. He knelt, his back to the audience, and his hands moved quickly. When he rose, the long tresses of hair lay across the fire.

Selon raised Spock to his feet, and the captains came forward to encircle his waist with a sword belt. A lirpa was put into his right hand, a shield into his left, and he stood before his family a fully initiate warrior.

No words had been spoken, for the rigorous testing had proved his worth, and his companions' acceptance of him indicated that he was considered worthy to join their ranks. There was no oath, as Kirk had automatically assumed there would be. A warrior so accepted needed no compulsion to act worthily. It was assumed he would do so as a matter of course.

There was, however, an additional, unexpected event. Spock handed his lirpa and shield back to the captains, and stepped forward.

"James, come here."

Kirk moved to kneel at his master's feet, and the Vulcan looked directly at the audience.

"My slave has proved loyal and trustworthy, and has shown himself fit to bear arms. My brother warriors have tested him, and are satisfied he will not be a disgrace to me as a fighting slave."

Lifting Kirk to his feet, Spock beckoned, and one of the household slaves came forward with a swordbelt, which the Vulcan fastened around Kirk.

"James, as a fighting slave you are granted certain privileges, and as custom demands, I inform you of them before witnesses. From this time only I may command you, and you are permitted to defend yourself from assault by any man, even if he be a free Vulcan. You will be welcome among the ranks of the warriors, though of lesser status than they, and you will be treated by them with the respect your skill and loyalty have earned. All this you are granted by Vulcan law."

"Thank you, my lord." Kirk found it difficult to speak. Though Spock had promised him equality in private, he had not expected any acknowledged improvement in his public status. Proudly, his head high, he followed his master from the hall back to their rooms where Spock would change for the family celebration that was to follow.

In the anteroom an elderly man was waiting for them. He rose at Spock's entrance, and Kirk noticed that he walked with a severe limp.

"Master Serret--thank you for coming so promptly. Have you been given refreshment?"

"I have, thank you, Spock. I also took the opportunity to look over the sketches you left for me. So this is the slave? Indeed a lovely creature. Such beauty deserves my finest work."

"I would trust no other than the finest craftsman on Vulcan to collar him fittingly. His body is perfect, but already the collar he wears is scarring his neck. You must insure a proper fit."

'Of course, of course. May I have your permission to measure him?"

"James."

Kirk stepped forward obediently, and Serret passed a length of silk cord around his neck.

"Is that comfortable? Good--now, let me see--yes, that is sufficient."

"When will it be ready?" Spock asked.

"You young people, so impatient," Serret chuckled. "However, for you, Spock--yes, if I put all my assistants to work it can be ready this evening."

"Thank you, Serret--I will be most grateful."

"My lord?" Kirk interrupted softly.